



2015 STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

Mayor Lou Rosamilia
Thursday, February 5, 2015

Good evening

Thank you Council President and members of the Troy City Council for agreeing to provide me with the chance to present you with my 2015 State of the City address this evening.

As you know, this is my fourth such speech and I would like to use this opportunity to discuss many different issues as we embark on another year in the Collar City.

Some of the topics I would like to speak about tonight are:

- the challenges we face,
- the opportunities we have in front of us,
- and the solutions that will help to better position our great City for the future.

But, first, I would like to thank some of the individuals who are often not recognized or commended for the role that they play in making Troy such a great place to live and do business.

These individuals include our:

- Religious leaders
- Business leaders
- Neighborhood groups
- Education leaders
- Board and Commission members
- Community Groups, AND
- Department Heads – some of our Department Heads have been able to join us tonight; please stand up to be recognized.

Your dedication and commitment are qualities that help to make the Collar City such a special place.

City Finances

It would be easy for me to stand in front of you this evening and only talk about all of the exciting things that are happening in Troy – It would not be difficult – all you have to do is look around. Over the last few years our City has grown by leaps and bounds. There is little doubt that Troy is in a better place here in 2015 than when I first took office.

But, we have our challenges, as well, and I will not hide from these challenges. The first thing I would like to discuss is something that will continue to be one of my primary focuses as we move through 2015 – addressing our current financial situation. Our fiscal challenges are real and the solutions are not easy.

With 2014 now behind us, I think it would be prudent to address the city's finances and to reassure our residents and business owners that my approach to ensuring our fiscal integrity will continue to:

- take into account the need to keep our tax rate down,
- maintain essential city services, AND
- invest in our future.

Like many other upstate cities, we face fiscal challenges. Since the mid-1990s, the City of Troy has been required to make payments of nearly \$6 million annually to the Municipal Assistance Corporation (MAC) as part of a deal brokered to restructure Troy's long-standing debts. As part of that agreement, the State Comptroller's office reviews the City's budgets each year and makes its recommendations for improvements and this input is taken seriously.

In addition to the MAC debt payments, overspending in recent years has resulted in a depletion of the City's reserve balance. In 2007, the City's General Fund reserves totaled over \$7,937,000. By 2013, the balance of those reserves had been depleted under \$2,643,000. With little financial cushion in future years, we must work towards fully-balanced budgets.

So, until the MAC debt expires in 2021, the City of Troy will continue to face difficult financial decisions. Ultimately, we will strive to put together a budget each year that is fair to both our taxpayers and the City's future.

With that said, my administration continues to pay close attention to our revenues and expenditures in the coming year and has already begun planning ahead for 2016's budget. Being vigilant now will allow us to ensure the long-term fiscal health and stability of the city.

Moving forward, Troy must live within its means and make the tough decisions that protect our residents and businesses. These challenges will not be solved in one budget cycle and they will not be solved through political theatre or partisan bickering. They will be solved by:

- individuals fulfilling their responsibilities
- working together, AND
- careful planning.

I am resolved to working with the members of the Troy City Council, but we must all be aware that the right decision is not always the popular one – and at the end of the day, we must all do what is right.

For the February City Council Finance Meeting, I intend on presenting an initial expenditure reduction of over \$300,000, which will be set aside for the deferred pension costs.

These reductions will include, but are not limited to:

- Deferred hiring of City employees, AND
- Deeper cuts into Department budgets.

Additionally, this figure does not factor in savings that will be realized from:

- Seeking lateral transfers to fill vacancies within the Troy Police Department, AND
- Hiring firefighters who have already completed Paramedic training.

Due to various other measures, we also expect to generate approximately \$380,000 in additional revenues over what we budgeted for in 2015.

This additional revenue will be generated from measures, such as:

- Establishing a Ticket Amnesty Program, AND
- A parking ticket rate increase.

As I said, the proposed budget adjustments will be presented to the City Council at its Finance Meeting in two weeks and additional expenditure reductions will follow.

Public Safety

In regards to Public Safety, the first thing I would like to do is say that my thoughts and prayers continue to go out to the friends and families of the individuals who lost their lives resulting from the six events of senseless violence over the past year. I have never been able to understand how certain individuals can have such a complete disregard for human life and I doubt that I ever will.

The City of Troy will not tolerate this type of behavior, and we will continue to make the necessary changes and work with our neighborhoods to do our best to prevent these actions from happening again.

I can also tell you that, as citizens, you should be very proud of the men and women that serve in the Troy Police and Fire Departments. They have done – and continue to do – a tremendous job.

Every week, I meet with Chief Tedesco, Deputy Chief McAvoy and Assistant Chief VanBramer and at each meeting, we discuss the ongoing efforts of the Police Department to ensure public safety and I am confident that the decisions being made are the correct ones.

While juggling a full case load, the Police Department's Detective Bureau was able to make arrests in each of the six homicide events. To me, that is very impressive and goes to show the hours that they have put in, and how hard they have worked. Make no mistake, this sends a very strong message to potential offenders of serious crimes – If you commit a heinous act in the City of Troy, you will be brought to justice.

In addition to the 100% arrest rate in homicide cases, the Police Department also was able to execute 31 search warrants for dangerous drugs and fire arms in our city. As a result, the Troy PD was able to:

- make 99 arrests,
- confiscate 31 firearms,
- take pounds of cocaine, herion, marijuana and various pharmaceuticals off our streets, AND
- seize almost \$67,000 in cash.

And this is just a small example of the diligent work that is being done, day in and day out, to make sure that our streets are safe and continue to become safer.

We are also working to ensure that we are being proactive when it comes to public safety. We recently were also able to install cameras into important intersections throughout:

- the Downtown Business District,
- North Central, and
- Lansingburgh.

As we have seen through some of our recent arrests, these cameras are potentially the critical, extra set of eyes we need to help make sure that we can identify guilty parties.

In 2014, the Police Department trained additional officers to the Emotionally Disturbed Response Persons team, meaning that now, over 50% of department members are trained in this specialty. In addition, Rev. Eric Shaw provided 'Diversity Training' to all sergeants and patrol officers during in-service training.

In the Fire Department, we recently saw the hiring of 15 new firefighters. Six of those hires had already received their paramedic training – meaning that this is saving the City approximately \$600,000.

In 2014, we also received an Assistance to Firefighters Grant for over \$400,000 that is helping to pay for the paramedic training for the new firefighters.

We are also making significant investments into our available resources for public safety:

- In April, we will have 2 new ambulances
- Right now, we are currently in the process of securing a new rescue pumper, AND
- We are also in the process of having 120 personal rescue devices installed.

Looking ahead to 2015, we will continue to work to make sure the streets of Troy are always becoming safer.

Just a couple weeks ago, we created a task force to help get to the bottom of a recent string of suspicious fires in Lansingburgh. In addition, we have also increased the number of patrols in the area and created a tip-line for individuals who might have additional information.

It is my hope that our City experiences less of these unfortunate events in 2015. I am optimistic that will be the case. Between the quality of the men and women in our Police and Fire Departments, I can assure you that we are in good hands.

An aspect of public safety that may sometimes fly under the radar, that must be mentioned, is our Department of Public Works.

The individuals in this department are the ones who make sure that our streets are clean, our trash is picked up and our roadways are cleared – this is a major piece of the public safety in Troy and the men and women in DPW do a fantastic job.

The work that has been done, particularly over the last few weeks in response to recent snow storms, is a testament to how beneficial our Department of Public Works is to our residents.

Planning and Economic Development

Over the last few years, the City of Troy has continued to become a place that people want to invest and do business – and 2014 was certainly no different.

Contributing to the City's success is the fact that we have:

- a great workforce,
- numerous top-notch educational & health institutions,
- excellent infrastructure, AND
- our business-friendly attitude.

From an economic development standpoint, in 2014, we saw over 30 new businesses open their doors in the City of Troy, bringing in hundreds of new jobs.

And while this continued development is impressive, what's most impressive to me is that it's not limited to one location and it's not limited to a few general types of businesses – we have seen:

- cutting-edge technology companies such as Apprenda and the development of the Center of Gravity;
- we have seen new restaurants like Slidin' Dirty and The Shop;
- we have seen places like Rare Form Brewery;
- places like Optigolf; AND
- just this week it was announced that Ecovative Design would be moving its manufacturing operations to Ross Value Tech Park from Iowa.

We continue to see this growth – and it is this type of growth that helps to ensure long-term sustainability of communities.

This influx of people wanting to do business in Troy has also recently translated into developers wanting to create additional housing units throughout the city.

Just this past fall, we entered into an agreement with Sequence Development and Kirchoff Companies to construct a new, \$25 million mixed use project with over 80 market-rate apartment units at the former City Hall Site at One Monument Square. We are very excited to have taken the next step in this process and look forward to seeing it become a landmark in the City of Troy for many years to come.

In 2014, we also saw

- the official opening of the River Street Lofts in the former Nelick's Furniture Building;
- On the North Side of Troy, we are seeing the 150+ units at Stoneledge Terrace; AND
- In South Troy, we are seeing the Summit Apartments attract new residents.

And we are seeing that trend continue into 2015 – numerous projects are closer to becoming realities. In August, it was announced that the Community Builders had bought the former Mooradian's Furniture building with the intention of spending \$21 million to develop 'Tapestry on the Hudson'. And just to its North, in October, Vecino Group started construction with a plan to spend over \$19 million to develop 80 artists' lofts in the former Kelly Clothes building.

We are seeing the creation of a vast array of housing stock that will ensure that there is something for everyone in the City of Troy.

While we are speaking about improvements in our neighborhoods, one of the most significant developments in Troy last year was the creation of the Troy Community Land Bank, which will be an important tool in our ongoing efforts to combat blight and vacancy in our City.

Shortly after it was announced that the Troy Community Land Bank was awarded by Governor Cuomo, Attorney General Eric Schneiderman announced that the new entity had received \$1.2 million in grant funding. This initial money will be used to help target numerous properties in the North Central neighborhood in order to return these parcels to productive use.

The Land Bank will ultimately work to get these properties back on the tax rolls and improve our neighborhoods in a manner that everyone can feel good about.

Another initiative undertaken by the City of Troy last year was entering into an agreement with Urban Strategies to conduct the first Comprehensive Plan in over 50 years – And I believe that we are off to a good start.

Over the last few years, one of my top priorities has been to improve the quality of life in the City of Troy and a major piece of that puzzle includes improving our neighborhoods.

In addition to the Troy Community Land Bank and the Realize Troy Comprehensive Plan being effective tools that we are using to accomplish our goal of enhancing our neighborhoods, we are continuing to effectively use our Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program.

In 2014, Troy spent over \$1,710,000 in CDBG funding on:

- targeted streetscape improvements in North Central
- city-wide housing rehabilitation for owner-occupied homes
- code enforcement, AND
- various park improvements.

And we will continue to use CDBG funding to bolster our neighborhood improvement efforts in 2015. This upcoming year, the City will be:

- investing \$1,000,000 to finish its improvements in North Central, AND
- spending an additional \$400,000 in:
 - code enforcement,
 - home owner housing rehabilitation projects, AND
 - park improvements.

And although we have enjoyed much success from an economic development and planning standpoint over recent years, we must work hard to continue to improve the perception of Troy so that even more people come to our City looking to live here and do business here.

I have always felt that, like any successful business owner, sometimes you have to spend money to make money. And I believe that, when we decided to bond for certain projects in the spring of 2014, we made a very responsible move.

By committing just over \$5 million, we enabled ourselves with the ability to leverage about \$20 million in grant funding. And I believe that these investments, over time, will more than pay for themselves.

Our 2015 economic development and planning goal are lofty – but I believe they are attainable.

I would like to see us:

- Move ahead with the Ingalls Avenue Boat Launch Project, which is a component of our ongoing efforts to revitalize North Central
- Continue to remediate the King Fuels site, which we have been working on with National Grid
- Continue moving forward with the redevelopment of the former City Hall site at One Monument Square
- Advance the redevelopment of the Marvin Neitzel Building, AND
- Continue to attract jobs

As I mentioned before, the continued redevelopment of Troy will benefit all of us living in the Collar City.

The saying goes, “A rising tide floats all boats.”

And this is especially true for economic development in the City of Troy.

As we...

- continue to see rehabilitation of our historic buildings,
- continue to add commercial properties,
- continue to attract more people to our City

...we increase the tax base and we lessen the burden on everyone else. So it is very important that we continue our efforts to bring more people to Troy.

Engineering and Code Enforcement

Under our new City Engineer, we have seen numerous projects move forward. These projects, which are taking place throughout the City, are long-term projects which will help to ensure that Troy's infrastructure is strong for many years to come.

In 2014, we moved forward with the replacement of the Spring Avenue Bridge. We have successfully demolished the old bridge and are in the process of constructing the new one. In fact, the expected completion date for the Spring Avenue Bridge has been moved up from November 2015 to late May 2015.

Over the past year, we have also progressed with the Seawall Stabilization Project – which is now fully funded by FEMA. We have successfully procured an engineering consultant to perform the design services for the project, which involves the stabilization of portions of the wall, as well as flood mitigation measures.

The design phase is anticipated to be completed in late June 2015; and following approvals, we anticipate bidding for construction-phase services later this year.

We are also moving forward with the Pawling Avenue Signalization project. In 2014, we successfully bid the construction of traffic signal modifications along Pawling Avenue, between Linden Avenue and Winter Street and also commenced overhead utility modifications. In 2015, we anticipate the commencement of construction to perform the traffic signal improvements in April, with an expected completion date in July 2015.

Another project that is moving along is the repairs of the Troy Downtown Marina. In 2014, we procured an engineering consultant to perform the design services for the project, which involves the construction of approximately 1,300 feet of marina, including flood mitigation measures. In March of this year, we anticipate the design of the project to be completed.

An additional initiative in the Engineering Department has been to enhance building demolition protocol. In 2014, the Engineering Department began implementing new standard procedures for the future demolition of buildings throughout the City. In the next month, we expect to have a new, completed manual of standard operating procedures.

In 2015, it was just announced that the City would be moving to Zone-based Code Enforcement. Through this Zone-based code enforcement, we will utilize one code enforcement officer in each of the City's five new zones. This is expected to translate into:

- improved community relations,
- efficiency of personnel, AND
- increased revenue to the City resulting from the improved efficiency.

This upcoming year, we also anticipate seeing movement of a project that has been in the works for many, many years – the South Troy Industrial Park Roadway. In 2015, we expect to see the approval of new limits for the road – from Main Street to Adams Street – at which point the City will be able to commence right-of-way acquisition in late 2015.

Making sure these projects continue to move towards completion is a goal of mine – our future will be better off for it.

Department of Public Utilities

Our Department of Public Utilities had a very busy 2014 and it is expected that 2015 will also be very productive.

In 2014, DPU started the process of land acquisition for the replacement of two, 110-year-old transmission lines and will continue to progress with the engineering of these lines into 2015 and 2016.

The department also replaced 2,500 feet of 24 inch sewer pipe and 600 feet of 48 inch sewer pipe. Using city staff, DPU was able to save an estimated \$400,000.

A water contract was signed with the Town of Brunswick in 2014. And, in 2015, the City will be discussing additional water contracts with Waterford and Halfmoon.

Recreation

Over the last year, we also saw many improvements throughout the City as the result of the hard work of our employees in Troy's Recreation Department.

At the Frear Park Golf Course, there were significant investments and golfers are benefitting from the \$1.1 million in upgrades.

In 2014, Frear Park:

- hosted 60 successful tournaments; AND
- we saw the installation of the new entrance sign;
- beautification outside the Pro Shop, AND
- a new Starter shed.

At the Knickerbacker Park Ice Arena, we saw the installation of new flooring. Also, in 2014, the ice arena made \$44,500 more than it did in 2013.

2014 also saw:

- the installation of a new handicapped swing in the North Lake Avenue Park,
- a new playset in Barker Park,
- a new basketball pole and hoop at Prospect Park, AND
- cleanup and revitalization in River Front Park and under the Hoosick Street Bridge.

Over the next year, we expect to see many similar upgrades to City facilities and parks.

At the Knickerbacker Park Ice Rink, we will be:

- updating the security system,
- re-facing the boards,
- repainting the lines on the ice, AND
- installing new locker room doors.

We also expect to repave the Oval and repaint our City-owned pools.

Looking ahead

In addition to all of the projects that have been previously mentioned, we have a lot to look forward to in 2015.

We will see our bipartisan Charter Review Commission work together to take an all-inclusive look into our City Charter to look at different ways that we can improve our governing document so that we can ensure future effectiveness and efficiency.

This month, we will come to the table with Time Warner to discuss a new franchise agreement. The current agreement is from 1988.

In 2015, we will start planning to celebrate the Troy's bicentennial of its incorporation as a city.

We will also start seeing the implementation of the SNUG program in North Central.

Another important aspect of the City that must be mentioned is the fanfare and popularity of some of the City's yearly events. The City and the Downtown Troy Business Improvement District have done a wonderful job promoting Troy, not only to our immediate residents, but to people throughout the Capital Region. You will continue to see:

- Live music at Rockin' on the River, Powers Park and the Marketplace.
- Downtown filled for River Street Festival, the Troy Pig Out, Chowderfest and Small Business Saturday
- Troy Night Out officially welcoming new businesses and celebrating existing ones, AND
- The Troy Turkey Trot and the Victorian Stroll.

We have had great relationships with our local educational institutions. RPI, Sage and Hudson Valley students take pride in our community. They attend events, dine at restaurants and frequent our stores – and that healthy relationship is important to me.

People want to be in Troy and people are excited to be in Troy.

If I had one word to describe it all it would be “Optimistic”. I am optimistic that we can continue to on this path of forward progress.

For that to happen:

- I need the help of the community,
- I need the help of our stakeholders, AND
- I need the help of our City Council

We must all set personal agendas aside and pull in the same direction.

What I am talking about is similar to what we saw over the last few days with the Snow Emergency. Despite the Snow Emergency being a new concept, I would consider this week’s efforts a success:

- The vast majority of our residents complied with our parking regulations,
- our City employees and our contractors worked diligently, AND
- we all worked together to ensure that we could make our roadways safer

In turn, we were able to see an end product that many should be proud of. This is the type of cooperation we, as a City, need moving forward.

There are so many good things going on in the City of Troy it is important that we recognize and share this information.

Conclusion

It truly is an honor to be the Mayor of the City of Troy.

I look forward to working with all of you in the coming year so that we can continue to move the City further ahead.

Thank you and God Bless.